

DAY CARE

MATTERS



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DAY CARE

M A T T E R S



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Day Care Matters is a series of five half-hour television programs. The order numbers and titles are:

- BPN 2930-01 Thinking Professionally
- 02 Supporting Family Relationships
- 03 Nurturing Through Physical Routine
- 04 Communicating with Children
- 05 Facilitating Play

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ACCESS NETWORK
295 Midpark Way, S.E.
Calgary, Alberta
Canada
T2X 2A8
FAX: (403) 256-6837

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Producer: Arthur Heller
Editor: Betty Gibbs
Graphic Designer: Barbara Coonfer
Typesetter: Teresa Christensen
Children's drawings by:
Michelle & David Dotto, Kristen Hamilton, Emma Titus

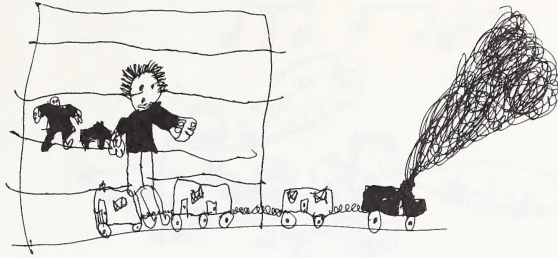
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INTRODUCTION

The video series, **Day Care Matters**, was developed principally as a resource for child caregivers, especially those who work with young children in day care centres. Parents and child caregivers working in other situations will also find information contained in the videos to be useful.

The primary use of the series is to assist people who are entering the child care field, particularly those enrolled in college level courses on either a full-time or part-time basis. Course instructors may use the videos in whole or in part to complement their classroom curriculum.

Caregivers who are employed in centres will find the videos useful as part of their professional development activities, and this guide will supplement and direct such in-service activity.

The information contained in the videos has been compiled from various sources, including recent research literature and the personal accounts of child caregivers. The videos present information to illustrate appropriate and exemplary child caregiver practices. They also present information that can act as a catalyst for further discussion and problem solving by the viewers.

The five half-hour programs making up the series **Day Care Matters** are:

- Thinking Professionally
- Supporting Family Relationships
- Nurturing Through Physical Routine
- Communicating with Children
- Facilitating Play

This guide provides information that is supplementary to the videos, and includes references to other reports and books that will enable caregivers to continue to learn and grow professionally.

Some readings have been suggested at the conclusion of each section. However, much of the information contained in the video series was based on the following books:

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth to Age 8

Sue Bredekamp (Editor).

National Association for the Education of Young Children; Washington, D.C. (1989)

Families and Early Childhood Programs

Douglas Powell.

National Association for the Education of Young Children; Washington, D.C. (1989)



THINKING PROFESSIONALLY

What really constitutes a professional caregiver? Being good with children is very important, as is being good with their parents, but these are not the only requirements. Caregivers must also have an in-depth knowledge of how children grow and develop, and of a caregiver's role in ensuring that such growth and development occurs in a healthy and positive way. Professionalism in caregivers includes the desire to stay current in their knowledge and a strong desire to improve their skills.

Child Development

A thorough working knowledge of how children grow, learn and develop is essential for a child caregiver.

Child development psychology studies the process by which people develop, from conception to adults. While there is general agreement about the sequence of development, there are different opinions about how best to encourage and support healthy development in children. The most prominent of these opinions are stated in the form of theories of development.

Theories may be thought of as attempts to explain and account for aspects of development that have been observed. They are useful in helping to make order out of our various bits of information and personal experiences.

Within developmental psychology there are three prominent approaches or theories that attempt to explain how development occurs: behaviorism, maturationism and constructivism. Sometimes other descriptions are used: maturationism may be known as biological or genetic theory; constructivism may be called developmental-interactionist or cognitive theory; and behaviorism is sometimes called learning theory.

Behaviorism is the branch of psychology that deals with objectively observable behaviors. Subscribers to this theory believe that behavior is externally controlled. After monitoring a behavior pattern, a behaviorist would alter it by systematically rewarding or reinforcing an alternative behavior. For example, a behaviorist might change the behavior of a child by using a form of time-out in order to deny the reinforcement that had caused a behavior originally.

Maturationism is the theory that focuses on the developmental forces within a child and subscribes to the view that genetic programming determines the parameters of child development. While maturationists believe that external or environmental forces have an important role to play in nurturing child development, they feel that development is determined genetically.

Constructivism is based on the view that a child's development is directly related to her experience, although not necessarily controlled by it. Constructivists maintain that children need a wide range of positive experiences, encouragement and guidance from adults if they are to develop to their highest potential. Understandably then, constructivists place a strong emphasis on children's activities and interactions.

It is important for child caregivers to understand these theories and to determine where their own approach fits. Subscribing to a particular theory will affect the way a caregiver views the children in his care.

The theory most generally recommended for childcare programs is the constructivist approach. This theory makes the most sense in the context of providing appropriate experiences and interactions for children, which is the role of the day care centre and the child caregiver.

The following is a list of the major characteristics of a program which follows a constructivist approach:

- Children are exposed to a wide range of experiences, and it is recognized that they will learn something from every situation.
- Children are given long, unstructured periods of play, so that their play can be as creative and complex as they wish.
- Children are given opportunities and are encouraged to socialize with peers and with adults.
- Caregivers are sensitive to the needs of the whole child. They are vigilant in their efforts to provide for the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, creative and spiritual development of each child.
- Children are presented with ideas, stories, situations and interactions that are aimed at challenging their current ideas and ways of doing things.
- The child care environment places a focus on the child's social and physical world and this is enriched by the child's caregivers.

Personal Qualities and Values

Caregivers need to possess ethical values and appropriate personality characteristics. Being a child caregiver requires having certain important attitudes towards yourself, your colleagues, the children and their families. A few of these important attitudes are described in the video.

Empathy is the capacity or ability to understand another person's feelings and emotions; in effect, to put yourself in another person's place. Everyone can empathize to some extent, particularly with close friends and family. The task for caregivers is learning to empathize with the children in their care. How does one see the world through the eyes of a baby, toddler or three year old? We were all children at one time, so reflecting back on the experiences we can

remember certainly helps, but many situations and experiences cannot be recalled. In addition to reflections on our own childhood, empathy requires that we get to know the children in our care as well as possible and ask ourselves at every opportunity what it is like to be that child.

Initiative, or the ability and willingness to see what needs to be done and do it, is another important attribute. It is important to follow up on activities that children show an interest in or aptitude for and develop play opportunities that will enhance that interest.

Caregivers who show curiosity and interest in the world around them and exhibit enthusiasm about learning will soon have children in their care who exhibit similar characteristics. Enthusiasm and a thorough enjoyment of life are infectious.

Confidence and self-respect are other features of caregivers that assist them in caring effectively for children. Doing a good job, accepting challenges, using initiative, being responsible, working hard and supporting co-workers and parents are all good ways to develop these positive attitudes about yourself.

Discretion and caution in judgement enable caregivers to gain the respect of others. Knowing when to talk and when to be silent, when to act and when to observe are essential skills in all relationships. They are particularly important in relationships with children and their families.

Always treating children and their parents with respect helps to foster good relationships. It also helps the children to develop healthy and positive self-concepts.

These are a few of the personal characteristics considered important in good caregiving. In addition to these, you need to remember your own physical and mental health. The job of caregiving is demanding and strenuous and many caregivers leave because they burn out. Finding ways to maintain high levels of physical energy as well as to release some of the daily stress are very important.

Professional Development

To continually improve their effectiveness with children, professional caregivers need to stay up to date in their knowledge and practices, whether in coordinating an activity, guiding a child, or setting up a room. No matter how busy the day with children, caregivers should take time to reflect on their job, to analyze their actions and to exchange ideas with colleagues. Attending workshops, seminars and conferences and reading journals and books help you to keep up with new knowledge. Sometimes a caregiver will have an opportunity to advocate on behalf of children and families. Participation in these activities is an integral part of behaving as a professional caregiver.

Activities

1. Identify the positive characteristics that make you a valuable caregiver. What characteristics do you feel you are lacking and how can you develop them?
2. Make an appointment with three day care centre directors. Find out what skills, knowledge and attitudes they look for when they hire caregivers.
3. Make an appointment with two or three family day home agency coordinators. Find out what knowledge, skills and attitudes they look for when they contract with providers.
4. During a visit to a day care centre, observe the actions and interactions of a caregiver. From your observations, try to estimate the theoretic orientation of the caregiver. Later on, check out your observations and estimation with the caregiver.

5. Prepare a statement that describes your own beliefs about children, parents and caregivers. Does it fit into any of the three orientations mentioned earlier?
6. Develop a portfolio of materials related to your growth as a professional. Include in it the names and purposes of child care associations you belong to and any journals to which you might subscribe.

----- Suggested readings:

Ade, W. Professionalization and its implications for the field of early childhood education. *Young Children*, 37(3), 25-32. (1982)

Combs, A. *A personal approach to teaching: Beliefs that make a difference*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, Mass. (1982)

Feeney, Stephanie; Christensen, Doris; & Moravcik, E. *Who am I in the lives of children?* Merrill Publishing, Columbus, OH. (1987)

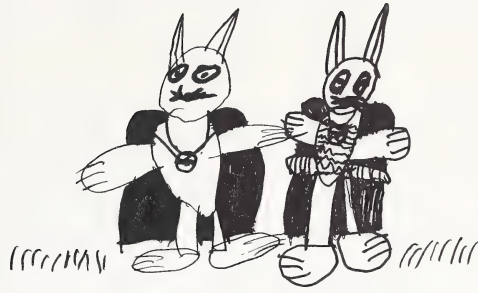
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Hostetler, L. & Klugman, E. Early childhood job titles: One step toward professional status. *Young Children*. 37(6), 13-22. (1982)

Katz, L. *Ethical considerations for working with young children*. ERIC documents. No. ED 144681. (1977)

Lay-Dopyera, Margaret. *Becoming a teacher of young children*. (3rd edition). Random House, New York, N.Y. (1989)

Spodek, Bernard; Saracho, O.; & Davis, M. *Foundations of Early Childhood Education*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. (1987)



SUPPORTING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Many child caregivers find that the most challenging aspect of caring for children is relating to their parents. For other caregivers, developing a relationship between the family and the centre, and promoting caring, understanding and a sense of belonging, can be one of the most rewarding parts of the job. There are numerous reasons that positive and open relationships between families and caregivers are essential for the family, the caregiver and the child. Two of the most obvious reasons are also the most important:

1. It is impossible for a caregiver to have a positive, lasting influence on the life of a child without involving the parents.
2. The vast majority of parents do not want to be replaced in the lives of their children. If a caregiver makes parents feel inadequate or unnecessary, the result will be destructive for the children and the families.

What are other benefits of open, positive relationships between parents and caregivers: for the parent(s), the caregiver(s), the child(ren)?

Child caregivers have an impact on parents even when communication is very limited or when parents are actively discouraged from getting involved or asking questions. Caregivers may sometimes make parents feel less than competent or decrease their self-confidence as parents, by giving unsolicited advice or telling parents what to do. Some parents view even the least experienced caregiver as an authority on children—and so it is easy for them to get the feeling that you know more than they do, even about their child—and that you do a better job than they do.

Sometimes caregivers attempt to relate to parents by trying to involve them, but do so in a way that says only, “We will let you come in and help us” or “We need some help with this project and would like you to help us with it.” In other words, the caregivers find ways to enlist parents’ involvement in ways that they can control. Mending toys, raising money or painting fences are good ways to involve parents, but they should not be the only level at which parents are involved. There is a difference between letting parents help out and working in partnership with them.

Caregivers and Parents Working Together

A more desirable relationship between caregivers and parents is one of mutual support. This includes sharing information and involving the parents in the centre's activities. The main aim, however, is to increase parents' confidence in themselves as competent parents and to enhance their pleasure in and understanding of the child. While formal or invitational contacts such as meetings or projects may help, the most important aspect of building such relationships is the daily interchange between caregivers and parents.

It is important for caregivers to view themselves as working with parents to ensure the care of the child, rather than working for parents or substituting for parents.

Sometimes caregivers complain that they want parents to be involved, repeatedly invite them to meetings or social events, but the parents seem not to be interested. There are a number of possible reasons that parents may not accept such invitations:

- Often working parents have little time and many pressures, and they are tired at the end of a day.
- Parents may feel nervous or apprehensive.
- Parents may be getting mixed messages from the centre—especially if the daily flow of information is limited.

What other reasons may parents have for not accepting caregivers' invitations for more involvement?

The relationship of caregivers with parents should be based on mutual acceptance and respect. Both can learn from and contribute to the other. Never compete with parents for a child's affection or allow parents to feel that is happening.

However, creating such a mutually beneficial relationship may be more difficult to achieve than it is to describe. It is difficult enough to establish such a relationship when there is agreement about what is important in raising children, and caregivers and parents share similar values and life-styles. Establishing a relationship can be difficult when caregivers and parents have different social or cultural backgrounds, and when parents' beliefs about what is good for children are different from those of the caregiver.

There are a number of obstacles to the development of good relationships between parents and caregivers.

1. **Caregiver values.** Sometimes caregivers find it difficult to accept parents, to refrain from making judgements about their lifestyles or parenting skills. In some cases they may consider that the parent should stay at home to care for the child.
2. **Parent attitudes.** Parents may bring a host of feelings with them including guilt, apprehension and suspicion. These may prevent, or make more difficult, the establishment of open communication.
3. **Time.** The time needed to establish relationships is often not easily available to parents and caregivers. Parents may be in a hurry to get to work or to return home and caregivers may have several other children in their care at pick-up and drop-off times.
4. **Lack of knowledge.** Caregivers may recognize the need to establish positive working relationships with parents but lack the knowledge of how to make it happen. As a result, caregivers may pay lip-service to the idea but actually avoid doing it.

What other blocks to the establishment of positive working relationships are there?

The best opportunities for caregivers and parents to establish relationships occur on a daily basis at drop-off and pick-up times. The following are some suggestions that may assist the caregiver at those times:

1. Gradually get to know parents personally and let them get to know you.
2. Talk with parents and establish an expectation of friendly conversation and exchange of information at arrival and departure times.
3. Always show respect for parents and their children, especially for information the parents provide about their child and for requests that they make.
4. Be cautious about giving advice. Even a novice caregiver may be threatening to a parent.
5. Make parents feel welcome. Anything that you can do to send the message, “You belong here too”, is worthwhile. This might involve a smile, a cheerful “hello” or a direct invitation to stay and talk.
6. Remember that parents are not only parents—they are spouses, workers and friends as well. This has two primary implications for caregivers:
 - It is not always necessary for caregivers to relate to parents as parents and to talk only about their children.
 - Parents may have pressures or concerns in their lives that are outside their relationship with their child.
7. Share everything positive about the child in an honest, open way. Emphasize the particular interests of the child.
8. Share more negative information selectively. Informing the parents that Mary hit one child, bit another and threw her soup on the floor may not be the best way to reunite tired parents and children at the end of the day.
9. Involve parents in making decisions about their child’s experience. For instance, it is important to discuss with parents when to begin toilet training and what approaches to take. If caregivers fail to involve parents in such decisions they risk alienating the parents and confusing the child.

10. Use parents as valuable sources of information about their child. Ask parents how they care for the child and what she is like at home. Such information helps in providing continuity for the child.
11. Accept individual differences in parents—in their parenting styles and in their relationships with their children.
12. Listen well. Make sure you understand the messages and the information given to you by the parents.
13. Attempt to see situations from the parent's perspective. Some things to remember:
 - Parents have difficulties separating from their child, even if the child appears not to find it difficult.
 - Parents miss much of their child's growing-up and probably spend time wondering what is happening at the day care.
 - Most parents were not cared for in day care centres and it is a world they may not fully understand.
14. Parents sometimes live away from extended families or have few family supports. They and their children often need support, and caregivers may be in a key position to offer it.
15. Know your own competence and limits. Caregivers should work together to help each other relate to parents, especially those who are the most difficult to reach.

In most instances both the initiative and the perseverance to create good working relationships needs to come from the child caregivers. Such relationships will be more easily established with some parents than with others, but caregivers should not avoid making an effort because of the apparent initial disinterest of the parents.

Activities

1. Ask a number of parents what is involved in leaving their child in a day care centre.
2. Ask parents how they made the decision to leave their child in day care.
3. When you have an opportunity to observe children at home or in other situations, try to gain some insights into the parent/child relationships. What general statements can you make about how parent/child relationships differ from caregiver/child relationships?
4. Observe parents at drop-off and pick-up times. How long do parents spend in the centre at these times? What topics of conversation occur between the parent and the caregiver?
5. Discuss with caregivers their feelings about the issues that arise with parents. How are they generally resolved?
6. Invite parents with different child care arrangements to meet and discuss the pros and cons of their particular arrangements.

----- Suggested readings:

Atkinson, A. A comparison of mothers' and providers' preferences and evaluations of day care center services. *Child and Youth Care Quarterly*, 16, 35-47. (1987)

Powell, Douglas. *Families and Early Childhood Programs*, NAEYC, Washington, D.C. (1989)



NURTURING THROUGH PHYSICAL ROUTINE

Children need the security of a somewhat predictable daily routine. However, daily routines must be based on the children's needs and these may change from day to day. Caregivers also need the security of daily routine, but they must have the confidence to alter it when it is appropriate.

When planning routines, remember that children need:

- opportunities to choose what they are doing and where they want to be
- the security of knowing what they can do, and knowing that caregivers will help them to guide their behaviors
- the opportunity to make choices without pressure, even to do nothing
- variety in places to spend time and things to do
- predictability in the persons, routines and responses of adults
- opportunities for privacy
- personal attention from adults.

Routines provide all aspects of the basic physical care of children—those things that keep them safe, healthy and content. In poor quality or custodial care, staff may view routines only as providing basic physical care.

Quality care goes far beyond physical care and over-emphasis on efficiency and hygiene. Children spend a lot of time in routine activities such as eating, resting or toileting. Caregivers who work with infants and toddlers may feel that on some days that is all they do.

Because children do spend so much time in routines and because they do not distinguish between play times and other times, it is important for caregivers to think carefully about how they complete these routines. They should be viewed not as time separate from the program but rather as an integral and important part of the experience offered to children. Children should not be rushed through routines nor should routines be occasions for boredom, when children have to spend long periods waiting.

Flexible planning for routines gives children a sense of order and predictability about the day, while at the same time allowing caregivers to plan their day around the needs of children.

In most activities with children we stress the need for them to have opportunities to make choices, to be given freedom to explore and learn, and to be regarded as individuals rather than as a member of a group. The same principles apply to routines.

Children need opportunities to experience and express their individuality and autonomy. It is through such experiences that they gain feelings of competence and self-worth. Routines provide valuable opportunities for such experiences. Ensuring that a child has the time to feed herself, to help to pull on his own socks, or to choose the book she wants to read at nap-time are all examples of appropriate approaches to routines.

A good day in child care is one without abrupt starts and stops or excessive waiting; it is a day that flows naturally for each child, and in which routines are based on each child's needs.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes and snack times are both rich with opportunities for children to play and learn.

While the situation will vary depending on the ages of the children, eating can always be a social time, a time to communicate and enjoy being with people, a time to learn new skills and concepts, and to enjoy the satisfaction of self-sufficiency.

Caregivers should value and encourage these aspects of eating rather than teaching an arbitrary set of table manners. The latter will be learned through imitation and observation, rather than through instruction from an adult. If children eat with people who use utensils, who ask for condiments to be passed, and who regularly say “please” and “thank you”, they too will adopt these ways of behaving.

For toddlers and preschool-age children, nourish the sense of “I can do it myself” by providing utensils, cutlery and plates that they can manage. Allow the children to pour their own juice, select their own biscuit, cookie or piece of bread from a plate, or cut their own piece of cheese.

These children can also experience the sense of “I can help others” by assisting with setting and clearing tables, washing dishes, preparing foods and helping to serve others.

If it is not managed well, and if adults see themselves as the directors of the operation, mealtimes can become a time when children have to wait a long time. Young children are not good at waiting or sitting still for very long. Having to sit and wait for food at the beginning of mealtime or sit at the table until everyone is finished eating is unnecessary waiting, from which nothing is learned.

Caregivers should consider a number of factors when setting up the mealtime and snack routine.

- Are the tables appropriate for children—about waist high?
- Do the chairs allow the children’s feet to rest comfortably on the floor?
- Do chairs for infants and toddlers have sides and a back?
- Are the tables and chairs spaced so that children are not crowded together?

- Are the children seated in small groups of not more than five or six children with one adult?
- Are the dishes and utensils appropriate for the children?
- Do spoons have short, easy to grasp handles and rounded bowls?
- Do cups and glasses have wide bases so that they tip less easily?
- Do plates and bowls have sides, especially for young children?
- Are jugs small enough that the children can lift and pour their own water and juice?
- Are the caregivers involved in eating with the children?

It is important that the caregiver eats and drinks alongside the children, even if it is just a “token” amount. When possible, it is better to sit with children rather than stand over them. It provides a good model for eating and helps create a more natural and family-like setting.

Morning and afternoon snacks can occur naturally and informally. Rather than making everyone stop what they are doing and sit down together, individuals or small groups of children can be invited to have their snack when they are ready. It may not always be necessary for the children to sit at tables—sometimes serving snacks outdoors or allowing children to sit on the floor or on cushions may be just as appropriate.

Following are some other factors to remember that will assist with meal-times and snack-times.

Infants

- Infants need a calm and quiet eating area so they are not unduly stressed or distracted.

- Infants who are fed using a bottle must always be held by the caregiver at mealtime.
- As infants become able to feed themselves, encourage them with safe finger foods.
- Engage in pleasant conversation with infants during mealtimes—even if you don't think they can understand you!

Toddlers

- Allow and encourage toddlers to feed themselves as much as possible. But always make sure that you are willing and able to assist them so that eating is not a frustrating experience.
- Toddlers will be as interested in the texture of food as they are in the taste. As a result, they will enjoy “playing” with food—mushing it together. It is important for caregivers to accept the need for young children to experiment in this way.
- Toddlers should be seated in small groups with a caregiver in each for mealtimes.
- Conversations play a very important part of a child's social, emotional and intellectual development.
- Introduce toddlers to new tastes and new foods.
- Serve small portions and offer seconds, rather than piling plates really full.
- Do not force a child to eat, as this may create feeding problems for the child. Provide some choices of food and quantity.

Preschoolers

- As children get older, encourage them to play a more active role. They can help prepare meals, set tables, wash dishes.

- Seating them in small, social groups at mealtimes gives them opportunities to engage in social conversation with each other and with a caregiver.
- Encourage them to try new tastes, and give them opportunities to serve themselves.

Diapers and Toileting

Being exactly correct about how you put on a diaper is not as important as the manner in which you do it. Diapering should always be completed with respect and gentleness, communicating to the infant what you are about to do and why.

The changing area needs to be a bright, cheery place that holds some interest for the children. Toys to hold and mirrors, pictures or mobiles to look at liven up a change-space. The change area should be positioned to allow the caregiver to maintain contact with and be accessible to all the children in her care. Although hygiene and cleanliness are very important, if changing happens completely outside the play area, one caregiver will be occupied away from the group for much of the day.

A diaper change may be one of the few times in a day that an infant has the caregiver's individual attention. It should be used as a time for talk and play and showing affection. Children learn about their bodies and its functions at this time, and it is important for caregivers to reflect that this is a natural, healthy and positive process, not one that is "dirty" or "naughty." Try to avoid becoming mechanical in your approach to diaper changing. Whenever possible, complete the task slowly, giving the child some time to kick her feet without the constraints of a diaper.

It is detrimental to the child, her self-image and her relationship with the caregiver, when her diaper is changed roughly, quickly, silently or grimly.

Toilet Training

Children can only be helped to use the toilet on an individual basis...learning to use the toilet is not a group activity.

There is no set age for toilet-training, nor is wanting to change fewer diapers a justifiable reason for caregivers to begin the process. An effort to help a child use the toilet should come as a result of observing signs of readiness and interest in the child. An important indicator of readiness is when the child shows awareness and can communicate that she is about to urinate or have a bowel movement.

One of the advantages of children being in groups is that they can learn from imitating others. This applies to toileting routines. Children may be more eager because they see others using toilets, and they may be willing to spend time sitting on a toilet if there are other children there. However, such situations should only arise spontaneously; it is inappropriate to establish a regime for groups of children to sit on toilets or potties.

The key to helping children develop successful toilet habits is to encourage them gently and quietly, without focussing too much attention on the activity. Make the environment attractive by providing books, making sure that the toilet is child-sized and that the child's clothing is easy to pull down and up. Then let the child lead the way.

As with all other major decisions about a child's experiences in child care, the decision to begin to help a child use the toilet should be made jointly by parents and caregivers together.

Resting

Almost all children in full time care need a sleep or a relaxing time during the day. However, with children as with adults, there is great variability in the amount of rest or sleep needed and in the time when it is needed. For that reason, the aim of rest routines with children should be for the greatest degree of flexibility and individualization possible.

In a group of infants there will be children going to sleep and getting up at different times of the day—depending on their individual needs. A separate room provides the best environment for infant sleep, but where that is not possible a quiet area with a visual barrier between the resting and play areas will provide for sleep time.

Most infants need to sleep in the morning and in the afternoon. Exactly when these naps occur will depend on the child's needs and on his routines at home. It is important to get information from the parents about the child's sleep habits and needs so that you can coordinate your efforts and provide continuous experience for the child.

Infants and toddlers enjoy being prepared for sleep. Being held, cuddled, rocked, sung to, or just soothingly talked to will help them get into a gentle and sleepy mood.

As with all aspects of quality child care, rest and sleep times are organized in response to the needs of children, rather than coming out of some previously established plan that treats all children the same. Children may be encouraged to sleep, but those who cannot or will not should not be pressured but be given other quiet choices such as looking at books. Children are also allowed to get up when they are ready.

Children often need help with transitions from play-time or meal-time to rest-time. Caregivers can create an expectation of calm by looking relaxed themselves, lowering their voices, sitting and reading quietly with children, closing blinds or curtains and playing quiet music.

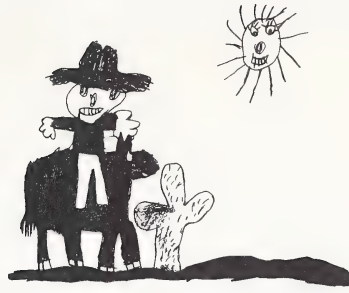
Personal items such as blankets, dolls or favorite toys will help some children make the transition to rest time. Caregivers may need to be especially attentive, perhaps lying down and talking individually to the child, gently rubbing her back, or humming a favorite song.

Suggested activities

1. Visit a number of day cares and note how they have designed their change area. How would you design a model changing area?
2. Observe how different day care centres approach eating, resting and toileting routines. Why do they approach them in that way? What suggestions would you have for improving any of these routines?
3. Invite mothers and fathers to talk to you about the importance of these routines at home. How are their ideas the same or different from those of caregivers?

..... Suggested readings

Bredekamp, Sue (Ed). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth to age 8*. NAEYC, Washington, D.C. (1989)



COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

As a child caregiver, the focus of most of your communication is the children. How and what you communicate will ultimately determine the level of safety and trust the children experience. When children feel safe, secure and cared for they will have the confidence to explore and develop new skills and understandings. Furthermore, how you relate to the children will directly influence how they relate to others.

Children communicate in a variety of ways. Younger children use crying, gesture and body movements as their primary methods. Older children learn and refine spoken language. However, it is important to pay attention to the non-verbal communication of children of all ages.

In order to communicate well with children you need to have good communication skills yourself. These include the ability to listen to the ideas of others, to pay attention, usually by maintaining eye contact with others, to be able to express yourself clearly, and to ensure that spoken messages are congruent with non-verbal messages. Good communication normally means having the ability to join in and maintain good conversations, taking turns in sharing ideas or information and not dominating the conversation.

With good communication strategies you can enhance a child's development in three important areas:

- by helping the child develop positive and confident relationships with adults
- by helping the child to develop good language skills
- by helping the child to understand and regulate her own behavior.

Good Relationships

In order to develop good relationships with children it is important to be attentive, honest, reassuring and worthy of trust.

There are many ways to establish **trust** in your relationship with a child. Some of the important ways include:

- giving verbal and physical comfort to a child
- sharing stories from your own experiences and describing your own feelings
- being consistent in your words and actions.

It is important to be **attentive** to children's behavior. Sometimes children will not have gestural or verbal language skills to enable them to communicate very clearly. The skill of the caregiver is in attending to all behaviors and responding in a way that creates communication.

Your skill at communicating with children depends on your being able to determine whether your messages are being understood. Listen and watch carefully to how children respond to your messages. If you feel that they have not understood, be sure to restate your message.

Make sure that your verbal messages are congruent with your non-verbal messages. For example, don't frown at a child you are encouraging, or attempt to show interest in a child while standing in an aloof posture (e.g., with crossed arms).

Children will quickly understand your degree of **honesty**. It is important to follow through on any assurances or promises that you make to children, and to reflect your feelings about an incident or event to them in terms that they can understand. Honesty is fundamental to the establishment of any relationship.

Children need a lot of **reassurance** that they are being understood. Actions and statements by caregivers that describe a child's behavior or paraphrase his or her statements will encourage the child to grow in confidence.

Language Development

To encourage language in children you need to be able to communicate at a number of developmental levels.

At times it may seem as though crying is the only way that infants communicate, but they do have a wide assortment of other sounds, gestures and physical actions. While they may not always use them with intent to communicate, your response will help them to learn the communicative power that they have.

One way to begin a dialogue with a non-verbal infant is in games where you and the child imitate each other. It is also important to talk directly to non-verbal children. Children at this age will usually understand far more than they can communicate and they need to hear the patterns of spoken language.

How can play with an infant assist in language development?

Older children will gradually refine their use of verbal language. However, many of the same principles apply:

- respond to all behavior as communication
- be prepared to imitate a behavior, matching the communication mode used by the child
- play *with* the child, making sure that you do not dominate
- encourage communication by engaging in conversations—whenever possible, by following a topic of interest to the child
- read and tell stories to the child, and encourage her to tell stories.

Young children are often fascinated with words and will invent their own as well as attempting to use new words. It is important to use language in ways that they can understand. Remember to name objects and describe events and feelings.

Conversations with children may be different from more sophisticated adult conversations. It is important to remember to wait for a response from the child and not to simply carry on talking just because the child does not respond immediately. Sometimes it may be necessary to “cue” the child to take his or her turn with a statement like, “What do you think?”

Paraphrasing is an excellent way to introduce new words or concepts to children as well as to ensure that you understand the child’s message and respond to it. Reflect the child’s intent back to him or her as a message. For instance, at the time when a toddler is making some gesture to get up following a nap, a paraphrase response would be: “You want to get up?”

There are many instances when paraphrasing is appropriate. Think of some instances and practise them in a role-play setting.

It is important to communicate with a child at his or her own physical level. This often means needing to sit or kneel when talking to a child, and ensuring that some eye contact is present.

Also important is ensuring that your physical body language communicates acceptance and interest. If you are standing with your arms folded, moving about, or watching someone or something else at the same time, it is unlikely that you will establish any meaningful dialogue.

In addition to informal and spontaneous conversations, caregivers should also look for opportunities to tell stories and read and sing to (and with) children. No child is too young to benefit from such experiences...all will enjoy the rhythm and patterns of sound, and older children will also enjoy the content. When reading or singing with children, remember to do so individually or with one or two children. Large groups of young children may become an exercise in management rather than a useful and exciting language experience. In small groups, or as individuals, children can also be encouraged to help you to tell stories, or to tell stories of their own.

Guiding Behavior

Children need an environment with enough freedom to explore and try out some of their social skills and personal behaviors in safety. Adults who refuse to allow children to make mistakes are stifling their emotional, social and intellectual development. Some guidelines, or boundaries of acceptable behavior will be necessary; without them a child's safety and the orderliness of the environment may be in jeopardy. Remember the following principles when creating guidelines:

- All guidelines must be developmentally appropriate.
- Guidelines should be kept to a minimum.
- All of the children need to understand the guidelines.
- Guidelines exist only to provide boundaries within which children can learn self-control.

***What guidelines exist in your centre? Who created them?
Are they all necessary?***

The word guidelines is preferred to the word rules. Children and adults can sometimes become fixated with notions of “breaking the rules”, or of believing that the rules are more important than the needs of an individual child.

There are a number of things to keep in mind while assisting children to understand and regulate their behavior.

1. Noticing and responding to appropriate behavior is more effective than punishing a child for inappropriate behavior. Commenting on or describing appropriate behavior helps the child to understand his or her behavior and will encourage its continuation.

2. Guiding behavior is a non-stop activity and does not occur only when the caregiver responds to a situation. Children learn from all experiences, and particularly from the example provided by caregivers and parents. Make sure that the way you behave reflects what you want from the children.
3. There are many reasons for children to exhibit behaviors that may be unacceptable. A part of a caregiver's task is to determine why the behavior occurs, as this will enable you to respond appropriately.

In some instances, ignoring unacceptable behavior may be the most effective way to deal with it. In another instance, the child's misbehavior may signal a need for attention, because the misbehaving child's needs are not being met in some way.
4. Try to use positive rather than negative language to guide behaviors. It is always more effective to explain to the child an acceptable alternative, rather than tell him or her what not to do. This provides an opportunity for the child to learn other ways of behaving.
5. At no time are the use of corporal punishment, ridicule or sarcasm acceptable ways of attempting to guide behavior.

A frequently used practice is "time-out." It is often justified on the basis that it works. Is "it works" a sufficient reason for adopting this practice? Does "time-out" work? How do you know?

Children experience emotions in their everyday encounters. As with behaviors, they need help in identifying and describing the feelings that they experience.

In some instances they will need reassurance that it is all right to experience and express their feelings. Sometimes, suggestions for appropriate ways to express feelings, especially those that have potential for hurting others, such as anger, need to be given.

Activities

1. Keep a diary of the conversations that you have with young children. Focus especially on:
 - who started the conversation
 - how long the conversation lasted
 - the topics of the conversation
 - how many turns the child and you took in the conversation
 - why you think the conversation was or was not successful
 - what you would attempt in a future conversation with this child that might improve communication.
2. Identify situations in which giving descriptions of their behavior back to children would be an appropriate action by the caregiver. Practise identifying and describing behaviors in non-judgmental ways.
3. Through observation and discussion with a child caregiver, determine the “rules” of the room. How were they determined? How are they implemented? Are they appropriate for the children? Why do they exist?
4. One approach to ensuring that you understand their real message when communicating with children is to use paraphrasing. Identify situations in which this method might be appropriate. Practise your skill with colleagues to improve your abilities with children.
5. Observe the parents and a child in conversation. Compare this to conversations between the same child and a caregiver. How are the conversations the same and different?

----- Suggested readings

Bredekamp, Sue (Ed). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*, NAEYC, Washington, D.C. (1987)

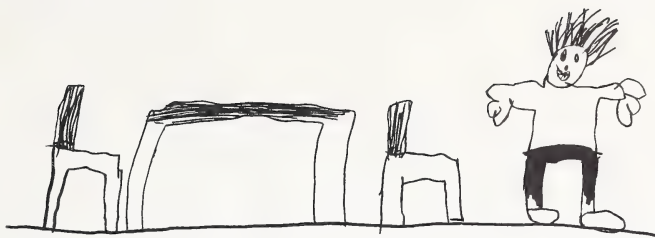
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FACILITATING PLAY

Play is the term used to describe activities that children spontaneously initiate and participate in. The most important criteria in a definition of play are:

- that the activities are freely chosen by the child
- that the child controls the activities.

Activities that are chosen or directed by an adult for children are not play. This does not mean that caregivers should not occasionally choose and direct an activity, nor does it mean that caregivers should not involve themselves in the children's play. On the contrary, often the involvement of a caregiver in the play of children can extend and challenge the thoughts and actions of the children.

Whether spontaneous or organized, real or imagined, inclusive or exclusive of adults, play is vital for the positive development of children. Play is a naturally occurring and dominant feature of children's behavior. Through play they learn about themselves and the world around them, as well as developing important skills. They learn how to live with others, to communicate, to use tools, to express themselves, to become absorbed and to enjoy themselves.

Given that play is so important to the experience, exploration and learning of children, caregivers need to give careful consideration to its provision. Children's play will be enhanced by careful planning. Providing appropriate space, materials, time, guidelines and involvement will enrich the children's play.

Space

When designing a play space, think about the children and play activities that it will need to accommodate. Space will be needed for active as well as quiet play and for both wet and dry materials. Position the messier activities near water supplies and on a floor that can be easily cleaned. The quiet space should be comfortable, well lit and stocked with reading materials and other quiet games and toys. The active area should be large enough to allow for lots of action and movement, and carpeted if possible.

One additional important consideration in planning space for play is to make sure that the “traffic flow” does not cut across any of the areas. Nothing destroys block play or story-time quicker than having a steady stream of non-participants walking through the middle.

Make sure that the space is reviewed and possibly redesigned at least once a week. There is more than one way to organize a room and flexibility adds interest.

Materials

Play materials are important in determining the direction and creative possibilities of a child’s play.

If you are in a position to purchase toys, evaluate them carefully. Children need different toys and materials depending on their developmental level and their abilities. A toy that is too complex or advanced may be dangerous or frustrating in the hands of a young child. Conversely, a simple toy may quickly become boring to an older child.

All materials—commercially purchased or home-made—should be evaluated for their safety. Anything that may be sucked, licked, chewed or bitten must be non-toxic and free of any parts that may be small enough to be swallowed. Materials should also be strong enough to withstand vigorous use, including banging and dropping.

Play materials for infants, in addition to meeting safety standards, need to be visually and aurally attractive. As the child’s coordination improves, play materials need to include items that can be manipulated, clutched and grabbed. A variety of textures will help a child extend her experiences. Infants may also enjoy toys that have some cause and effect properties, such as dolls that squeak when pressed and balls that bounce when dropped.

As soon as infants learn to walk they become interested in movement. Toys that can be pushed and pulled as well as materials that encourage infants to practise walking, climbing and riding are all important. Children at this age will also enjoy manipulating small objects and creating their own imaginative play. Make sure that dress-up clothes, junk box materials and art materials, such as play-dough, paint, paper and string are also available.

Dramatic play materials are popular and important for children throughout the early years of life. They allow children to experience being someone other than themselves and to practise a wealth of skills and relationships. Dramatic play materials include play houses, stoves and fridges, pots, pans and telephones. The list of possibilities is endless and older children will become increasingly adept at using almost any materials to represent something in their dramatic play.

Natural materials, such as sand, water and clay are among the least elaborate and yet most responsive of all play materials for children at all levels of development. They provide for manipulative and creative play of children in various ways and at various levels of complexity.

Time

Children will adjust their play to the time period they have. However, the longer and less interrupted the blocks of time given to play, the more imaginative, creative and complex the children's play will become. Play that is constantly interrupted, or parcelled into short time blocks, will generally be less imaginative and have less value for the child.

Some aspects of daily scheduling will disrupt play times—events such as lunch time and rest time. However, caregivers should question whether they really need to stop play activities in order to gather all of the children together for circle time. It may be possible to provide choices for children to either continue with their play activity or listen to a caregiver reading a story.

Guidelines

Play guidelines need to be simple and straightforward so that they can be understood by the children. There should be as few guidelines as possible, so that group care does not become an arbitrary policing environment.

Two fundamentals on which any guidelines should be based are:

- safety—for self and others
- concern and respect for others.

Guidelines should not be imposed to suit the caregivers, but rather to provide parameters within which children may safely and freely learn to regulate their own behavior.

It is important for caregivers to regularly review the guidelines they have established and consider their impact on the play of children. A guideline that prevents children from mixing sand with water may prohibit many learning opportunities, although it may make sense to the janitor! Similarly, a guideline that restricts the number of children in a play area may prevent a natural expansion of the play or the introduction of more complex relationships and characterization.

Ending and clearing away after play can be a difficult time. Give children clear, advance notice that play time is coming to an end. Whenever possible this should include a rationale, such as telling children that in 5 or 10 minutes it will be time to clear away and wash hands so they will be ready for lunch (rather than clapping your hands, shouting for play to stop now, flashing lights or ringing bells, expecting that children will respond).

Children should be encouraged to store materials tidily, so that they are easily found another time. Taken as a whole, this task can seem complex and insurmountable to a child, so caregivers should look for ways to join in the clean-up process alongside the children or break it up into manageable individual tasks.

Caregivers and Play

Children need caregivers who will become play partners with them and who will value and respect their play. The role of caregivers is not to supervise play, nor to take the role of an inquisitive outsider who is only interested in asking questions about what she believes the children should be learning.

Some caregivers have difficulty becoming child-like—crawling on the floor, dressing up, sliding down the slide, pretending to be in hospital, etc. However, the ability and willingness to play with children is an invaluable and important aspect of the job. At times children's play can become stilted—they exhaust their own ideas, or they experience some difficulties with their play and your involvement is welcome. At other times their play is so exhilarating that they invite you to join in. Caregivers can extend the ideas, imaginations and possibilities of the children by joining in. However, it is important to play *with* the children and not to take over and direct the play.

Suggested activities

1. Observe in a day care program. Identify the different stages of play observed.
2. Observe how children use materials. Is the material always used in the way the manufacturer intended?
3. Observe what caregivers do at the time the children are engaged in play activities.
4. Interview a parent and a caregiver. Ask what they consider the value of play. What are the similarities and differences?

----- Suggested readings

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GETTING THE MOST FROM A VIDEO PRESENTATION

An educational television program can be an effective and stimulating learning resource. Because of its ability to convey information and meaning through scenes and sounds, television is one of the most effective tools at your disposal. Many educators have found that the effectiveness of video programming can be enhanced in the following ways:

1. Use the **stop** and **pause** buttons frequently to highlight program segments. This will help break the passive viewing habit created in viewers by commercial TV and focus their attention on your purpose for showing the program.
2. Use the **counter** to prepare for the viewing session. Set it to zero at the start of the program. This will help pinpoint the location of segments to be reviewed later. You can then create a log by jotting down the counter numbers that correspond to important segments.
3. Be specific about viewing objectives *before* showing the program. Viewers will be able to focus their attention better if they are aware of what to look for in a videotape. Prepare a list of guideline questions on the chalkboard, or on photocopied handouts.
4. Since educational television programs generally include more material than can be digested in a single viewing, show the program in its entirety once and then, after clarifying any vocabulary difficulties and reviewing specific learning objectives, show selected portions a second, even a third, time. Again, the stop and pause buttons can be used to allow viewers to take notes—or to focus attention on particular items of importance.
5. Television programs consist of both audio and video signals, and viewers often need to be stimulated in order to derive maximum information from both. During the second viewing of a program segment, you can assist the development of viewing and listening skills by showing the picture but turning off the sound and asking for recall of audio information. Alternatively, leave the sound on but eliminate the picture.
6. Both for viewing comfort and for note-taking convenience, television should not be viewed in a dark room. However, light can also be a problem, so the television set should be located to avoid window reflection on the screen. To eliminate ceiling-light reflection, tilt the set forward slightly.
7. Ensure that all viewers have a clear line of sight to the set. If necessary, alter seating arrangements to give every participant a satisfactory view of the screen.
8. Adjust the controls of the television to ensure good color balance, adequate brightness, and contrast.
9. In some cases, it is useful to have tapes and equipment available for independent viewing by individuals.

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